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# OPTIMIZING COMMUNITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TRAINING PROGRAMS IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** Optimal learning opportunities are key to developing the potential and quality of human resources in society. However, the gap in equitable distribution of learning opportunities is still a challenge that must be overcome. This research aims to describe the optimization of training programs in non-formal education institutions as a solution in providing learning opportunities for the community. Using a qualitative approach and literature study, this research explores strategies and measures that can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of training programs in non-formal education institutions. The results show that optimizing learning opportunities through training programs in non-formal education institutions can be achieved by identifying community needs, increasing program flexibility, involving local communities, providing mentors and mentoring, providing certification, building partnerships with industry, utilizing technology, conducting periodic evaluations, providing financial assistance, and conducting effective promotion. The implementation of these measures can provide significant benefits to communities, such as increased skills and knowledge, economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, increased community participation, improved public health, women's empowerment, improved literacy and education, increased inclusiveness, fostering local innovation and development, and improved overall quality of life. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of non-formal education institutions in providing optimal learning opportunities for communities and the strategies that can be implemented to optimize the positive impact of such training programs.

**Keywords:** Community Empowerment, Optimization, Learning Opportunities.

## INTRODUCTION

Maximum learning opportunities can increase the potential of the community. Good education and broad access to learning opportunities provide a variety of positive benefits, not only for individuals but also for the social and economic development of a society (Billett 2001; Boomaars et al. 2018). One of the strategies that can be carried out to increase the potential of the community is to increase skills and knowledge, encourage the development of creative and innovative thinking, empower the economy to be better,

improve social welfare, empower women and involve the community in increasing social participation (Ticket 2001; Lantz and Brav 2007). By providing maximum learning opportunities, a society can create an environment that supports the development of each individual's potential and leads to positive growth collectively (Gil and Mataveli 2017).

To optimize learning opportunities, various strategies and approaches have been explored in the field of formal education such as inclusivity and universal access that ensures that all individuals have equal

access to education, educational technology to improve access and more interactive and adaptive learning methods, improving the quality of teaching and curriculum to reflect the latest developments in knowledge and technology, procurement of scholarship programs and other financial assistance, provision of pre-school education to encourage children to prepare for formal learning, conduct evaluation and performance monitoring to improve the quality of education (Rachmadyanti et al. 2021; Tirtoni et al. 2020). A holistic and coordinated approach between various parties can help achieve the goal of optimizing learning opportunities. This includes the government, educational institutions, the community, and the private sector (Ayuningtiyas, Suryanto, and Herachwati 2023).

In addition to formal education, the community can also maximize learning opportunities through informal and non-formal education (Essach 2007). This education can include skills training, language courses, personal development programs, and other learning activities that do not require much time involvement or adherence to the formal curriculum that typically occurs in everyday life, involving learning from personal experiences, social interactions, and the surrounding environment (Blaak, Openjuru, and Zeelen 2013; Gross and Rutland 2017). Some of the ways people maximize learning opportunities through informal and non-formal education are community activities, skill development, joining training centers and online courses, training programs and cultural arts activities (Firdaus 2018; Widaningsih and Abdullah 2016).

Non-formal educational institutions are one of the places that have learning opportunities with a scope of various fields and learning objectives. This institution has the flexibility to adjust the learning program to the needs and interests of the learning community (Lantz and Brav 2007; Latief, Hendrayani, and Samsuddin 2022). Apart from that, non-formal educational institutions are also actively involved with the community

such as art skills, entrepreneurship and others. Non-formal educational institutions are also a place for skill improvement and community empowerment with a more innovative approach (Arabaci and Özkan 2023; Lee, Matthew, and Orpinas 2022; Romi and Schmida 2009). With a wide scope and diverse learning objectives, non-formal educational institutions can make a significant contribution to the development of individuals and society as a whole (Widaningsih and Abdullah 2016).

The community can take advantage of training programs to optimize learning opportunities. There are many things that the community can do when participating in the training program, such as participating in training with programs to improve work skills and develop entrepreneurial skills so that people can change their life patterns in the future (Arabaci and Özkan 2023; Soliz and Ecton 2023; Wang, Chen, and Du 2019). The community can also take advantage of training programs to improve communication skills that are beneficial for careers and be able to take on leadership roles in other communities (Hawgood et al. 2022). Training programs at non-formal institutions can also be used to increase community productivity so that they can take advantage of time for better quality daily work and provide many benefits (Sherrer and Prelip 2019; Yayac et al. 2019).

However, what is happening in the current community is the lack of equal distribution of learning opportunities which has a significant impact on the gap in the quality of human resources (Cruickshank and Mainsbridge 2022; Lavigne and Good 2021; Solodkova, Grigorieva, and Ismagilova 2018). The causes of the gap in the quality of human resources are the implementation of training programs in non-formal educational institutions that are not optimal, various learning and training programs that are not systematically structured, the community does not have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary for personal development and training programs that are less innovative

cannot attract the interest of trainees, so they are less motivated to Attend the training seriously (Arslan, Mirici, and Öz 2019; Latief, Hendrayani, and Samsuddin 2022; Lee, Matthew, and Orpinas 2022; Shahid and Saleem 2021; Sunarto et al. 2023).

For this reason, it is necessary to understand and improve the optimization of training programs in non-formal educational institutions in providing learning opportunities to the community, overcoming educational gaps, improving the quality of human resources, supporting lifelong learning, strengthening the role of non-formal educational institutions and developing inclusive education policies. So that reforms can be carried out in creating a greater positive impact on the development of human resources and society as a whole, such as involving a number of innovative and significant elements in the field of education.

This research provides novelty through an integrative approach in optimizing training programs in non-formal educational institutions that focus on community empowerment. This study examines the synergy between inclusivity, training innovation, and community-based approaches, which have not been discussed comprehensively in previous studies. Not only that, the purpose of this study is to find out and describe the optimization of training programs in non-formal educational institutions and determine the steps that affect the success of training programs on community learning opportunities.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study seeks to find out and describe the problems in optimizing learning opportunities through training programs in non-formal educational institutions. In this case, the researcher conducted research by means of descriptive research with a qualitative approach. According to (Nuridin Ismail 2019) Qualitative research is research that is sourced from data, utilizes existing theories as explanatory materials and ends with a theory. The data collection technique used in this study is adjusted to the purpose of this study, namely literature study.

According to Sutrisno in (Kurniawan 2013) A study is called literature research because the data needed to complete the research comes from libraries in the form of books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, journals, documents, magazines and so on. The variables in literature study research (literature study) are non-standard. The data obtained is outlined in sub-chapters so as to answer the formulation of the research problem.

According to Zed in Melfianora (2019), in library research, library research is not only for the first step in preparing a research framework (research design), but at the same time utilizing several library sources. The library source is used to obtain research data. The sources of literature research in this study are taken from printed books, scientific journals in the last 5 years, and online news articles that contain information about the problems that will be discussed in this study, namely the optimization of learning opportunities through training programs in non-formal educational institutions.

The steps of the writing method in compiling this article are as follows:

1. Identify the scope and purpose of the writing

The first step is to identify the scope and purpose of writing that will help set boundaries and focus writing for a writer. This can be done by determining the main topic and scope limits, preparing research questions and determining the research method to be used so that the writing results will meet the needs of *the audience*.

2. Selection of relevant literature sources

The second step is to select literature through various sources such as scientific journals, books and articles. This literature search was carried out to obtain a comprehensive understanding of concepts related to optimizing learning opportunities.

3. Conduct literature analysis

After determining the relevant literature sources, the author conducts an in-depth analysis of the collected literature and looks for patterns, findings, and perspectives that are relevant to the research topic.

4. Article Writing

The last step is to write an article in a structured manner starting from the introduction, writing method, results and discussion, and finally the conclusion. In the writing process, the author gives credit to the original author through the right quotes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Optimizing Learning Opportunities

Learning opportunities are an opportunity that must be used by the community to improve skills in dealing with the needs of life today. However, what happens in the surrounding environment is the lack of equal distribution of learning opportunities which has a significant impact on the gap in the quality of human resources. The causes of the gap in the quality of human resources are the implementation of training programs in non-formal educational institutions that are not optimal, various learning and training programs that are not systematically structured, the community does not have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary for personal development and training programs that are less innovative cannot attract the interest of trainees, so they are less motivated to take the training seriously.

Optimizing learning opportunities involves strategic identification and the use of effective and efficient methods to maximize learning outcomes. This includes careful selection of learning resources, instructional strategies, and educational technologies to create an environment that encourages deep understanding and knowledge retention (Suartama et al. 2019). The goal is to ensure that learners are provided with the most rewarding and impactful learning experience, leading to increased skill acquisition and knowledge retention (Sukma and Priatna 2021).

Some strategies to optimize learning opportunities are 1) planning study time by creating a consistent schedule, studying at the best time with focus and concentration, 2) setting short-term and long-term learning

goals by setting a time limit to achieve these goals, 3) utilizing digital resources and learning applications, joining study groups that have the same goals and avoiding excessive use of social media, 4) applying a variety of learning methods and multimedia resources, and 5) conducting self-evaluation to remain consistent in achieving learning objectives (Solodkova, Grigorieva, and Ismagilova 2018).

Learning opportunities in non-formal education include various forms of learning outside the formal education system, such as schools or universities. Non-formal education provides greater flexibility in meeting the needs of specific individuals and groups (Demchenko et al. 2021; Lesseig, Slavik, and Simpson 2023). There are several learning opportunities in non-formal education such as training and workshops, online courses, taking on a role in a community, participating in certification programs or professional development training, joining language and cultural exchange programs, participating in project-based learning and practicing hobbies to make it a profession (Ryazanova, Naumov, and Kamennykh 2020). Learning opportunities in non-formal education provide many options for personal and professional development without being tied to a formal structure. People can choose programs that suit their interests, needs and goals.

### Training Programs

Training as an organized procedure for acquiring knowledge or skills for a specific purpose, such as those required for a specific job or organization (Obaju, Musa, and Abass 2022). A training program refers to a series of activities designed to develop a person's skills, knowledge, and abilities in a particular field. Training programs can be organized by a variety of institutions, including companies, educational institutions, government agencies, or non-profit organizations (C.L., C.S., and N. 2021). There are several types of training programs such as 1) employee training, which is a training program within the company to develop technical and interpersonal skills of employees, 2)

management training, which is a training program for managers and leaders of organizations to improve leadership skills, time management, and decision-making, 3) occupational safety and health training, which is training to teach the principles of occupational safety and health in the company. work environment, 4) technical training which is special training to develop technical skills in fields such as IT, software development, or certain technologies, 5) entrepreneurship training which is a training program for individuals who are interested in starting their own business, developing a business plan, and understanding aspects of entrepreneurship, 6) sales and marketing training which is training to improve sales, marketing, and negotiation skills, 7) Communication training, which is training to improve verbal and non-verbal communication skills, both in business and social contexts, 8) Soft skills training, which is training for the development of soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, creativity, and emotional toughness, 9) Language training, which is a training program to acquire or improve foreign language skills, 10) Education and professional development training, which is a training program aimed at To improve skills and knowledge in certain fields of education or professions, 11) Information Technology and Digital Security training, which is training to develop skills in the management of information technology and cybersecurity, 12) Environmental and Sustainability training, which is a training program to understand and implement sustainable practices in various sectors, and 13) Financial and Financial Management training, which is training to understand the concept of Financial Basics, Financial Planning, and Personal or Business Financial Management (Aizuddin and Adam 2021; Coelho et al. 2018; Hwangbo et al. 2020; Nafukho et al. 2022; Nsour, Iblan, and Tarawneh 2018).



Figure 1. Training participants at PKBM Sukamulya

Each training program must be carefully designed according to the needs and goals of the participants or the community. In addition, periodic evaluations are also needed to ensure the effectiveness of the program, optimize community learning opportunities in a training and adjust it to changes in needs or developments in related fields. The effectiveness of training programs is influenced by the readiness of learners, stakeholder engagement, and its practical implications.

### **Non-Formal Educational Institutions**

Non-formal educational institutions are organizations that provide learning opportunities outside the formal education system. These institutions cater to a wide range of learners, including people who may not be in formal education, want to acquire specialized skills, or prefer alternative learning methods (Revelation 2018). Non-formal education is usually flexible, student-centered, and aims to meet the needs of certain target groups.

There are several types of institutions that are classified as non-formal educational institutions, namely 1) community centers that offer a variety of educational programs, workshops, and training sessions to meet the needs of the community, 2) adult education centers that focus on providing education for adults who may not have completed formal school or want to improve their skills for

personal or professional development, 3) vocational training centers that offer training practical and hands-on in a particular trade or skill, preparing individuals to work in a specific industry, 4) online learning platforms that provide non-formal education through online courses, webinars, and other digital resources, which allow people to learn at their own pace and convenience, 5) NGOs and Non-Profit Organizations that run educational programs and initiatives with specific community targets or address issues social, 6) on-the-job training programs to provide non-formal education and training to employees, either internally or through partnerships with external training providers, 7) libraries and museums that organize educational programs, workshops, and events to promote learning and engagement with a variety of subjects, 8) language schools i.e. institutions that offer language courses outside the formal education system, which caters to people who want to learn a new language for personal or professional reasons, 9) community learning centers that focus on providing educational opportunities tailored to the needs of specific communities, addressing local challenges and promoting lifelong learning, and 10) hobby and interest groups i.e. informal groups that come together around common interests can also serve as platforms for non-formal learning experiences (Apriliansa and Nawangsari 2021; Lesseig, Slavits, and Simpson 2023; Shahid and Saleem 2021; Wahyu 2018).

Non-formal education institutions have an important role in meeting the diverse learning needs of society, promoting lifelong learning, and complementing the formal education system. Non-formal educational institutions offer flexibility, accessibility, and a more personalized approach to the learning process. In addition, there are other benefits that non-formal educational institutions have, namely improving community skills and abilities, helping in community empowerment, overcoming educational gaps, adaptability in creating a learning environment, increasing job opportunities and educational innovation (Latief,

Hendrayani, and Samsuddin 2022; Soliz and Ecton 2023; Solodkova, Grigorieva, and Ismagilova 2018). This will be obtained to the maximum if it has a quality program, gets support from the government and community involvement in the learning process.

### **Optimizing Learning Opportunities Through Training Programs in Non-Formal Educational Institutions**

Optimizing learning opportunities refers to the systematic improvement of the educational experience to maximize the effectiveness and accessibility of learning for diverse populations (Pearce 2021; Purwanti et al. 2024). The flexibility of non-formal education allows it to be tailored to the specific needs of learners, which is particularly important in contexts where formal education may be inaccessible or inadequate (Sa'diyah et al. 2023). Optimizing learning opportunities through training programs in non-formal educational institutions can be done by implementing several strategies that support the effectiveness and success of the program. There are several steps that can be taken, namely 1) identifying the needs and demands of the community, 2) program flexibility by adjusting the schedule and curriculum of the training program so that the needs of the community are met, besides that it can also provide various time options and choose teaching methods that can be accessed by participants with diverse backgrounds, 3) collaborate with certain communities in the planning process, implementation, and evaluation of the program. This helps to ensure that the program is truly relevant and reflects the real needs of the local environment, 4) providing mentors and mentoring who can provide individualized support to participants. This can help improve understanding of the material and provide a motivational boost, 5) provide official recognition or certification to participants who complete the training program. This not only provides an additional motivational boost, but can also increase participants' opportunities in the job market, 6) establish partnerships with related

companies and industries to integrate the needs of the job market in the training program. This can help participants acquire skills that are in line with industry demands, 7) utilize information and communication technology to improve the accessibility of training programs such as online training, webinars, and other digital resources can expand the reach of the program, 8) conduct continuous evaluation of the program. By gathering feedback from participants and measuring results on a regular basis, institutions can continuously improve and improve the quality of the program, 9) provide financial support or scholarships to participants in need. This can open the door for those who may face economic barriers to join the training program, 10) make good promotional efforts to increase public awareness of the training program offered. Ensure information about learning opportunities is available and easily accessible to prospective participants (Apriliana and Nawangsari 2021; Latief, Hendrayani, and Samsuddin 2022; Romi and Schmida 2009; Widaningsih and Abdullah 2016).



Figure 2. Training participants at PKBM Sukamulya

By implementing these measures, non-formal educational institutions can be more effective in providing beneficial learning opportunities for participants and supporting the development of individuals and communities more broadly.

Increasing the optimization of learning opportunities provides a number of significant benefits for the community. Some of these benefits involve increasing individual capacity and building the community as a

whole. According to (Revelation 2018) There are other benefits in the form of 1) increased skills and knowledge. Training programs can help communities to improve their skills and knowledge. This can include technical skills, vocational skills, or knowledge in various fields that can increase competitiveness in the job market, 2) economic empowerment. By improving skills and knowledge, people who take part in training programs have a better chance of getting a better job or starting their own business. It can contribute to improving the community's economy and increasing the level of welfare in society, 3) poverty alleviation. By providing community access to training programs, non-formal education institutions can help alleviate poverty by providing opportunities to those who may lack access to formal education or decent work, 4) increased community participation. The training program certainly involves active participation from the community. This can strengthen social bonds and increase involvement in community development for the community, 5) improve public health. Training programs related to health, hygiene, or agriculture can have a positive impact on overall public health. People who have health-related knowledge and skills can reduce the risk of disease and improve quality of life.

Meanwhile, according to (Apriliana and Nawangsari 2021; Wijana et al. 2022) The benefits of increasing the optimization of learning opportunities in non-formal educational institutions are 1) women's empowerment. Training programs can play a role in women's empowerment by providing access to education and training, helping to change social norms, and increasing women's role in economic and social life, 2) improving community literacy and education. The training program also includes elements of literacy and community education. This helps to increase the level of literacy and general knowledge in the community, 3) increases inclusivity. By expanding access to education, training programs in non-formal educational institutions can increase educational inclusivity, include individuals

who may be marginalized or unable to access formal education, 4) encourage local innovation and development. Training programs can stimulate local innovation and development by providing skills that are relevant to the needs of the community or society. This can help communities or societies to overcome local challenges with innovative solutions, 5) improve the quality of life. Improving the skills, knowledge, and capacity of society as a whole can contribute to improving the quality of life at the individual and community levels.

By maximizing learning opportunities through training programs in non-formal educational institutions, people can feel a significant positive impact in various aspects of their lives.

## CONCLUSION

The training program can be considered to have provided maximum learning opportunities when it has implemented systematic steps in the planning, implementation and evaluation process so that people who take part in the training program can feel the benefits of the program in their daily lives. In the planning process there is goal identification, needs analysis and program design, while in the implementation process there are competent mentors and companions, learning methods and available resources and finally there must be a thorough evaluation process. All processes in this training program in order to maximize learning opportunities must see the impact on the community participating in the training program, such as post-program monitoring.

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